

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 TEHRAN 01803 241349Z

43

ACTION SS-25

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S E C R E T TEHRAN 1803

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS1

TAGS: PFOR, IR, ET

SUBJECT: ETHIOPIAN SITUATION

1. DURING INFORMAL CONVERSATION OF FEBRUARY 24, UNOFFICIAL ISRAELI AMBASSADOR, URI LUBRANI, WHO USED TO BE ISRAELI AMBASSADOR TO ETHIOPIA, PHILOSOPHIZED ABOUT THE SITUATION IN ETHIOPIA WHICH HE HAS BEEN FOLLOWING AS CLOSELY AS HE CAN FROM THIS DISTANCE. HE IS QUITE DISCURSIVE ON SUBJECT, BUT WHAT HE HAD TO SAY SEEMED TO BOIL DOWN TO THIS: IF ERITREA CAN OBTAIN SOME DEGREE OF INDEPENDENCE, IT WILL BECOME A FIRM MEMBER OF ARAB LEAGUE AND WILL EFFECTIVELY DENY ETHIOPIA ACCESS TO SEA, STATUS OF DJIBOUTI NOTWITHSTANDING. ON OTHER HAND, ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT HAS NEVER KNOWN HOW TO HANDLE STRATEGIC OR TACTICAL MILITARY PROBLEMS AND SIMPLY USES ARMS AND AMMUNITION TO KILL ALLEGED OPPONENTS WITH NO DISCRIMINATION. IN ADDITION, ETHIOPIANS HAVE TRADITIONALLY BEEN POOR OCCUPIERS OR OVERSEERS SIMPLY BECAUSE OF STUPIDITY AND LIMITED INSIGHTS. IF ONE ACCEPTS THIS AS A REASONABLY ACCURATE PORTRAYAL, WHAT ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT NEEDS MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE TODAY IS PROPER ADVICE. ACCORDING TO LUBRANI, THEY MAY NEED AMMUNITION AND PROBABLY DO, BUT MORE THAN ANYTHING THEY NEED SOMEONE TO HELP THEM THINK. WHERE DOES THIS LEAVE THE UNITED STATES? RATHER THAN SEE A TOTAL BREAK-UP OF ETHIOPIA, LUBRANI FEELS THAT WE SHOULD

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 TEHRAN 01803 241349Z

HELP OUT THE EXISTING GOVERNMENT, POOR THOUGH IT MAY BE.

AT THE SAME TIME, HE FEELS THAT WE SHOULD HAVE CONTACT
WITH ERITREANS BUT OF A SUBTLE AND DISCREET SORT SO THAT
WE CAN KNOW WHAT IS GOING ON WITHOUT
COMMITTING OURSELVES TO THEIR INDEPENDENCE.

2. RECOGNIZE THAT FOREGOING IS ISRAELI PERCEPTION.
ONLY PASS IT ALONG FOR WHAT IT MAY BE WORTH. MY SHORTHAND
VERSION OF WHAT LUBRANI HAD TO SAY MAY LACK IN SUBTLETY
AND INSIGHT, AND THIS TELEGRAM WOULD NOT HAVE
BEEN WRITTEN IF IT WERE NOT FOR LUBRANI'S RECOGNIZED EXPER-
TISE IN MATTERS ETHIOPIAN.
HELMS

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NNN

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